

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 16696 01 OF 02 161607Z

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ACTION SS-25

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R 161455Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5717

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 16696

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, NP

SUBJECT: NPAL PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO DELHI DEC. 11-12

SUMMARY: THE GOI USED THE ONE-DAY VISIT OF NEPALESE PRIME MINISTER RIJAL AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SEND BACK A MESSAGE ALONG THESE LINES TO THE KING: "INDIA HAS DONE A LOT FOR NEPAL AND WANTS TO CONTINUE TO BE FRIENDS WITH NEPAL. BUT SOME NEPALESE ACTIONS RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT ITS INTEREST IN CONTINUING THE FRIENDSHIP. IT IS NOW UP TO NEPAL TO SET THE TONE OF THE RELATIONSHIP." THE GOI APPARENTLY DID NOT MENTION SIKKIM. NOR DID IT MAKE ANY EXPLICIT THREATS. INDIA APPEARS TO EXPECT SOME RESPONSE FROM THE KING AND, UNTIL IT GETS THAT, THINGS WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE ABOUT AS AT PRESENT, I. E., TENSE BUT NOT ACTIVELY HOSTILE. END SUMMARY.

1. NEPALESE AMBASSADOR K. B. MALLA BRIEFED THE DCM DECEMBER 13 ON THE VISIT TO DELHI DECEMBER 11-12 OF NEPALESE PRIME MINISTER RIJAL. (PLEASE PROTECT MALLA WHO NOTED THAT HE HAD NOT GIVEN DETAILS OF THE VISIT TO OTHER DIPLOMATS.) THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICERS DEALING WITH NEPAL HAVE PLEADED THAT THEY ARE TOO BUSY PLANNING THE KING OF BUTAN'S VISIT TO DISCUSS RIJAL'S VISIT, BUT A COLUMN BY THE
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 16696 01 OF 02 161607Z

WELL-CONNECTED TIMES OF INDIA BUREAU CHIEF, DILIP MUKERJEE,

DECEMBER 14 SUPPORTS MALLA'S VERSION OF THE VISIT. THE PRINCIPALS CAREFULLY AVOIDED PUBLIC COMMENT ABOUT THEIR TALKS, WHICH GAVE THE PRESS LITTLE TO GO ON BUT WHICH ALSO INDICATED THE SERIOUS NATURE OF THE SESSIONS.

2. ACCORDING TO AMBASSADOR MALLA, INDIA, INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN DID NOT RAISE WITH RIJAL THE NEPALESE CRITICISM OF INDIA'S DECISION TO MAKE SIKKIM AN ASSOCIATE STATE. AMBASSADOR MALLA DOES NOT BELIEVE PRIME MINISTER GANDHI MENTIONED IT EITHER. INDIAN DISPLEASURE WITH THE NEPALESE REACTION IMPLICITLY UNDERLAY THE ENTIRE VISIT, HOWEVER, AS INDIA EXPRESSED ITS CONCERNS ABOUT THE INDO-NEPALESE RELATIONSHIP.

3. ALTHOUGH THE NEPALESE AMBASSADOR WAS NOT PRESENT FOR RIJAL'S MEETING WITH MRS. GANDHI, HE UNDERSTANDS THAT SHE TOLD RIJAL THAT INDIA WAS GOOD FRIENDS WITH THE FORMER KING AND WISHED TO BE GOOD FRIENDS WITH THE NEW KING. NEPAL HAD RAISED QUESTIONS, AND NOW IT WAS UP TO NEPAL TO INDICATE WHAT RELATIONSHIP IT WISHED TO HAVE WITH INDIA. CHAVAN TOLD RIJAL MUCH THE SAME THING, WITH THE ADDITION HOWEVER OF MENTION OF HOW MUCH INDIA HAD DONE FOR NEPAL IN TERMS OF AID, SUPPLY OF ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES, AND RESTRICTIONS ON THE MOVEMENT OF NEPALI CONGRESS EXILES IN INDIA. CHAVAN SAID THAT INDIA DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE NEPALESE POSITION.

4. NEPALESE PRIME MINISTER RIJAL MOSTLY LISTENED. AMBASSADOR MALLA GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT THE GOI DID NOT EXPECT ANY REPLY BUT WANTED RIJAL TO CARRY THE MESSAGE TO THE KING, FROM WHOM A REPLY OF ONE SORT OR ANOTHER ULTIMATELY HAS TO COME.

5. SPECIFIC INDIAN COMPLAINTS: ACCORDING TO MALLA, CHAVAN RAISED THREE SPECIFIC ISSUES WHICH BOTHERED THE GOI:
(A) CHINESE DISTRIBUTION OF ANTI-INDIAN PROPAGANDA IN NEPAL; (B) PAKISTANI PROPAGANDA AMONG RETIRED INDIAN GURKHAS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE GURKHAS GOT LESS UNDER INDIA THAN THEY HAD UNDER THE BRITISH; AND (C) NEPAL'S SPEECH IN THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE UNGA IN WHICH IT CALLED THE INDIA NUCLEAR TEST "DANGEROUS". ON THE LATTER, CHAVAN CHARGED THAT

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NEW DE 16696 01 OF 02 161607Z

NEPAL HAD TRIED TO HUMILIATE INDIA BEFORE AN INTERNATIONAL FORUM.

6. RIVER PROJECTS: GOI ENERGY MINISTER K. C. PANT TOLD RIJAL IN A SEPARATE MEETING THAT INDIA FELT NEPAL DID NOT TALK FRANKLY ABOUT ITS RESERVATIONS ON PROPOSED HYDROELECTRIC PROJECTS. THESE PROJECTS WOULD BE LOCATED ENTIRELY OR PARTIALLY IN NEPAL BUT WOULD PRODUCE ELECTRICITY PRIMARILY

FOR INDIA. PANT IMPLIED THAT NEPAL WAS MOVING SLOWLY FOR POLITICAL REASONS. AMBASSADOR MALLY BELIEVES THAT THESE PROJECTS ARE FAR MORE IMPORTANT TO THE GOI THAN THE ISSUES MENTIONED IN PARA 5 ABOVE. HE NOTES POLITICAL PRESSURE FOR THESE PROJECTS IN THE POPULOUS STATE OF UTTAR PRADESH, THE HOME OF BOTH PANT AND THE PRIME MINISTER.

7. OTHER ISSUES: AMBASSADOR MALLA SAID THAT THE INDIAN RESTRICTIONS ON THE NEPALI CONGRESS EXILES LIVING IN INDIA ARE STILL IN EFFECT, ALTHOUGH HE BELIEVED THE GOI WAS USING ITS INFLUENCE TO GET THE GON TO RESPOND FAVORABLY TO OVERTURES FROM THE LEADER OF THE MODERATE FACTION OF THE NEPALI CONGRESS, GENERAL SUBARNA, FOR LIBERALIZATION OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN NEPAL. ALSO, NEPAL'S TRADE WITH AND TRANSIT THROUGH INDIA CONTINUED UNHINDERED. (RIJAL DID RAISE WITH CHAVAN GOI ACTION TO STOP SELLING PETROLEUM PRODUCTS TO NEPAL FOR RUPEE PAYMENT, BUT CHAVAN RESPONDED THAT INDIA HAD TO IMPORT POL ITSELF AND NEEDED ALL THE FOREIGN EXCHANGE IT COULD GET.)

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 16696 02 OF 02 161638Z

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C O N F I D E N T I SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 16696

EXDIS

8. DILIP MUKERJEE'S ARTICLE: THIS COVERS MUCH OF THE SAME GROUND, ALTHOUGH WITHOUT ATTRIBUTION TO THE GOI. MUKERJEE NOTES THE REACTION IN NEPAL TO SIKKIM AND THE CHINESE PROPAGANDA. AFTER CITING GENERAL SUBARNA'S AND OTHER

CRITICISM OF THE SYSTEM OF PANCHAYAT DEMOCRACY IN NEPAL, MUKERJEE OBSERVES, "THE QUESTION OF POLITICAL REFORMS CONCERNS NEPAL AND NEPAL ALONE. IT IS UP TO KATHMANDU TO DECIDE UPON THE PACE AND THE TIMING. BUT ANY ATTEMPT TO WHIP UP ANTI-INDIAN FEELINGS TO DEFLECT POPULAR ATTENTION FROM THE PROBLEMS AT HOME IS ANOTHER MATTER." ON THE BROADER QUESTION, MUKERJEE ARGUES THAT WHILE IT IS UP TO NEPAL TO DECIDE IF "CONSOLIDATION OF ITS NATIONHOOD WILL BE FACILITATED BY WEAKENING ITS LINKS TO INDIA" AND ALSO "WHAT NEPAL'S STANCE SHOULD BE ON MATTERS IMPINGING UPON INDIA'S VITAL INTERESTS," THE KING MUST "ASSESS WHETHER THE PEOPLE OF NEPAL WILL WANT TO PAY SUCH A PRICE." NUKERJEE ADDS THAT "BILATERAL QUESTIONS ARE BEST RESOLVED BILATERALLY IN AN ATMOSPHERE FREE FROM TENSIONS." ON HYDROELECTRIC PROJECTS, HE SAYS THAT RIJAL WAS TOLD THAT "WHATEVER HAS TO BE DONE MUST BE DONE QUICKLY IF INDIA IS TO FIT THEM INTO ITS OWN PLAN PROJECTIONS."

9. COMMENT: INDIAN CONTINUES A TOUGH LINE WITH NEPAL,
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 16696 02 OF 02 161638Z

SEEKING A BROAD UNDERSTANDING AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL WHICH COINCIDES WITH NEPAL'S STRONG CULTURAL, GEOGRAPHIC, HISTORICAL AND ECONOMIC TIES WITH INDIA. IT WANTS THE GON TO STOP NEPAL'S OWN AND THIRD-COUNTRY CRITICISM OF INDIAN WITHIN NEPAL. IT IS IMPLICITLY THREATENING BUT NOT EXPLICITLY TIGHTENING THE SCREWS. THIS SITUATION WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE UNTIL INDIA FEELS REASSURED ABOUT THE NEPALESE INTENTIONS.
MOYNIHAN

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